

## **Sweeter Than Sugar** by [milevenmirkwood](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** And then Mileven just burst in like the Kool Aid man, Baking, F/M, Fluff, I honesty love Karen Wheeler, Mike is adorable and creative, Mom dates, SO MUCH FLUFF, This started as a mom date

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**Summary:**

Mike gives El a math lesson the best way possible: while baking.

## **Sweeter Than Sugar**

Mike Wheeler looked out of the window for what seemed like the thousandth time. Finally Karen Wheelers pulled into the driveway and Mike quickly pulled back the curtains.

Karen walked in with Holly on her hip and a bag of groceries in one hand see her son breathing heavily on the couch, humming to himself.

"Hi honey." she greeted with a small knowing smile.

Mike pretended to be surprised to see her.

"Oh hey mom."

Karen set Holly down and made her way into the kitchen. Holly made her way to her big brother, reaching her arms out. Mike scooped her up, setting her on his lap.

"How was your day?" she asked, curls bouncy as she made her way throughout the room unpacking.

"Uh okay I guess. How was yours?" Mike responded.

If Karen didn't already suspect her son, she certainly did now. He never asked her how her day was.

"Good. Dropped Holly off at daycare, had lunch with Joyce, bought your father some lunch from the restaurant and stopped by the grocery store."

Mike stood, arms tightening around his baby sister. He leaned against the doorframe, trying to act causal.

"Oh yeah. How is Ms. Byers?" he asked.

Karen took the opportunity of having her back turned to smile.

Gosh how clueless does he think she is?

"She's good. Doing much better since last year of course. She's been helping Will with his coping and such. Jonathan's been studying for the SATs. She says Nancy's over there so often, they've started to automatically set the table for five." she says with a chuckle.

Mike weakly chuckles back, slowly losing interest.

"So that's all you talked about?" Mike asked, ignoring Holly tugging at his long black hair.

"Yes Michael. Why are you so curious?" she asked, finally done unpacking.

"No reason."

"Okay well why you don't you go let Holly play and get started on your homework while I start on dinner. Is El staying over for dinner?"

Mike's cheeks flushed slightly at El's name and nodded.

"She's coming over around 6."

Mike set Holly down, who quickly ran to her various toys strewn around the house. He was about to go down to the basement.

"Oh and Michael? Speaking of El, Joyce told me something very interesting happened the other day."

"Moooooom! Oh god what did you guys talk about?" he asked, pink cheeks turning full on red.

At that point, Nancy Wheeler walked through the front door.

"Hi honey. I thought you were studying with Jonathan today?"

"He picked a coworkers shift." Nancy said, voice laced with a little disappointment.

Mike quickly turned to her.

"Do you mind? Mom and I were talking."

Nancy was about counterback until she saw the look on her brother's face.

"What are you guys talking about?"

"Nothing! Just go away."

"Michael be nice to your sister. Nancy will you please give us some privacy?" her mother asked politely.

Nancy looked at Mike one last time, before going upstairs, with that same smile everyone was looking at him with. Like they want to smile but won't. His friends wore it, Nancy wore it and now even his mother.

"What did she tell you?" Mike asked, defeatedly.

"Why don't you tell me?" Karen asked while placing her hands on her hips.

"Well El and I were at her house..."

"Okay so next step is 1 1/2 cups of flour. Now I hid all the cups except the 1/4 cup. How many 1/4 cups do we need to make 1 1/2?" Mike asked El.

Her eyebrows scrunched up in concentration. She started to count on her fingers when Mike shot her a look.

She smiled sheepishly.

"Sorry."

"It's okay. Just think, you know this."

She nodded and thought.

"Try to simplify it. They're just numbers. Think money. How many quarters are in a dollar?"

"4."

"Right. Well the 1/4 cup is the same as a quarter so if 4 quarters

make a dollar-"

"4 quarters make a cup!" El finished with a smile.

"Yes and if  $1/2$  a cup is two quarters-"

"6! 6 quarters is  $1\ 1/2$ !"

"Yes! Good job El." Mike said with a smile just as wide as hers.

Mike walked over to the table and sat down.

"I'm gonna chop these apples while you add the flour. Try to keep track how many cups you add.

Mike used the knife to peel the apples and scooped out the core. While chopping, Mike slyly put aside a piece of apple every time he heard El lightly tapping the bowl with the cup, signaling that she was trying to get every drop even though he told her that wasn't necessary.

He felt her presence behind him and he tried to focus. Mike could easily see himself getting too distracted by her closeness and chopping off a finger.

"You're really good." El commented and Mike felt his cheeks heat up.

"Thanks. Don't tell the guys, but I like to help my mom cook sometimes. My dad doesn't like it though."

"Why?"

"He says it's for..." Mike trails off.

"Mike?"

"Forget it. What's the next step?"

El frowned but let it go. She learned that lying isn't the same as not wanting to talk about it.

" $3/4$  cup of sugar."

"So that's..."

"1/4 three times?"

"Exactly."

Mike finished chopping the apples just as El finished with the sugar. He got up and looked through the cabinets for a small bowl. Finally he found it only to realize that El was moving ahead without telling him. Smiling to himself, he filled the bowl with water.

El looked at him confused.

"It's for the apples. It's a trick my mom taught me. Putting apples in cold water stops them from browning too quickly."

"Browning?"

"Going bad. Getting gross." he explained and she nodded.

"Are you done with your half?" he asked, looking over the recipe.

"I think so." she said, leaning in to look at the cookbook.

Mike was all too aware of how close she was and had trouble focusing. Looking over at her, he couldn't help but smile.

"What?" she asked, smiling a little.

Mike just brushed the little patch of flour off her nose and El flushed. He gazed at her for a second too long before turning back to the book.

"We just need to add baking powder." he said, walking over to the cabinets. Searching and searching, Mike found the little bannister on the top shelf.

"Hold on, I got it." El said.

The can gently floated down and Mike reached up to meet it half way. Mike knew this probably wasn't to trying on her, but he still didn't want her use her powers on something so little. Reaching in his

pocket, he handed her a tissue and she said a small thank you.

They added the baking powder and combined their halves.

"Okay now we take a scoop of the dough and put it on the pan." Mike said offering her a spoon. Together, they took turns scooping the dough and pushing it onto the sheet pan, enjoying the taste as they lick their fingers.

"Okay time to put it in the oven." Mike said and El walked over to grab the timer.

Mike slid the sheet pan in and El looked at the timer with curiosity. She knew what it was, but didn't really understand it. It was like a big watch, small clock that ticked a lot until it made a loud ringing. She was so frightened by the sudden sound, she ran to her room and grabbed her supercom to talk to Mike. He instantly calmed her down, telling her about all the things that scared him as boy. Something called a fire drill and him crying in front of his classmates.

"Oh we don't need that, El." Mike said, grabbing the timer and setting it down.

"But Joyce uses it when she uses oven."

"Yeah but we'll be keeping track with my watch. Now the cookies have to cook for 10 minutes. When will they be done?" he asked.

El looked at her own watch, shiny with a pink band.

"4:32."

"Good. I should probably start on my homework. Do you want to help?"

El nodded eagerly. She liked watching Mike doing his homework, especially when he has to read stories and he reads to her. Sometimes she helps him answer questions.

Mike sat down on the couch, sliding his binder between the arm of the couch and the left side of his body. El took her place on the other side of him, placing her head on his shoulder. Mike smiled to himself,

shyly wrapping his arm around her shoulders. El grabbed the book off his lap and opened the book to where the bookmark was.

"Chapter 4: The Body..."

10 minutes later the two reluctantly separated to check on the cookies. Mike grabbed a pot holder and opened the oven door. A delicious smell of warm cinnamon apple came over them and El sighed with happiness. El watched with caution as Mike removed the sheet pan. She remembered the day Will was standing too close to the oven, joking around with Jonathan and accidentally bumped against the hot oven door. He wasn't hurt seriously, but El still worried all the same.

"They smell good. Let's finish the chapter and let them cool down." Mike suggested.

Joyce Byers couldn't wait to get home, collapse on the couch and finally relax. She'd been working since 7 that morning and if her feet could speak, they'd be screaming in agony. Deciding that she was too exhausted to cook and Jonathan would be busy with Nancy, she'd just order pizza and call it a day.

A delicious scent hit her nose as she climbed out of her car. Figuring the neighbors were cooking, she made her way into the house. Opening the door, Joyce saw something sweeter than cookie or any dessert for that matter.

Mike Wheeler stood with his back towards her in the living room, hands occupied with a tiny hand in one and a cookie in another. Lips locked with her Ellie, both smiling into the kiss. After a moment they separated, foreheads touching. El pulled back to finally realize her adoptive mother.

El smiled at her and Mike turned to see what El was looking at. His eyes widened and cheeks reddened.

Mike, overcome with so many thoughts and emotions, couldn't do anything but freeze.

"Hey Ms. Byers."



"Hi Mike. What's going on here?" she asked, trying to not smile.

"Mike and I used math to make cookies!" El said excitedly.

"Well Mike thank you for the cookies and helping El. Why don't you grab a few for your family and run on home?"

"Why? Can he stay for dinner?" El asked, confused.

"No I should probably be getting home." Mike said, quickly grabbing his things.

"You guys uh enjoy the cookies. Bye Ms. Byers. Bye El." he said, exiting the house.

El frowned, not fully understanding what just happened.

"Cookie?" she asked, offering her own cookie.

Karen Wheeler couldn't help but let out and awww.

"Gah! Mom stop it's not like that. We-she was just happy about learning!"

At that moment, there was a knock at the door and everyone already knew who it was.

El stood at the door, biting her lip with anticipation. Joyce took her shopping on her day off and El fell in love with pale gray dress with a baby blue belt. She loved it so much, she didn't take it off. Smiling, Joyce told her she didn't have to and made sure the saleswoman rung the dress up.

Mike rolled his eyes and stalked over to the door, only to be taken aback with El's appearance.

"Hi Mike." she said with a smile.

Mike didn't even hear Nancy come down the stairs.

"Wow El you look really pretty. Doesn't she look pretty Mike?"

Growing flustered and annoyed, he grabbed El's hand and started

going to the basement.

"Oh my babies. Mike having a girlfriend and Nancy losing..." Karen trailed off.

Nancy's smile slowly slid off her face, now replaced with a look of panic.

"Losing what?" Mike asked, looking between his mother and sister.

Karen's adoration was also replaced with panic.

Then it hit Mike.

"Oh gross!"

"Wha- how do you even know about...that?!" Nancy asked, face growing red.

"Nancy I'm 14 not 3! Ugh! With Steve?"

"Hey there is nothing wrong with Steve! He's changed." Nancy defended.

"Gaaah! Have you ever done it while I was here? Was it when I caught him sneaking in your room?"

"What?!" Karen Wheeler asked.

"Mike!" Nancy said between gritted teeth.

Holly's whimpers interrupted them, her big blue eyes filling with tears.

"No no no." Karen said, making her way to her youngest. By the time she picked Holly, the three year old was full on balling.

"Well I gotta get started on homework." Mike said, pulling El to the basement.

"Me too." Nancy said, going back upstairs.

Karen bounced Holly up and down, shaking her head

**Author's Note:**

Inspired by while I was baking. You know how much fun math class would be if we got food out of it? Anyway this isn't my best work but here it is. Let me know what you think!